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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV RO

SUBJECT: CABINET FALLS IN FIRST SUCCESSFUL POST-1989
NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

REF: A. BUCHAREST 683

1B. BUCHAREST 681

1C. BUCHAREST 669

Classified By: Classified By: DCM Jeri Guthrie-Corn, reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. For the first time since the 1989 revolution a Romanian government was toppled when the Liberal Democratic Party (PDL) Cabinet fell on October 13. Using strict party discipline the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Social Democratic Party (PSD) received the votes necessary to end the minority government less than two weeks after it began. President Traian Basescu now controls the timing of the nomination of a new prime minister as all sides look for an advantage in the upcoming November 22 presidential elections.

END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) A coalition of disciplined PNL and PSD successfully toppled the minority government led by Prime Minister Emil Boc. On October 6 a coalition of the PNL, PSD, and Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) filed a no-confidence motion following the October 1 collapse of the governing coalition and the resignations of nine PSD ministers in protest of President Traian Basescu's dismissal of PSD Interior Minister Dan Nica (reftel). This marks the first time since the 1989 revolution that a no-confidence motion has succeeded in bringing down a cabinet.

13. (SBU) The PDL had worked to peel off "responsible" members of the PSD and PNL caucuses who preferred to wait for the outcome of the presidential race before striking alliances, and did in fact succeed in converting three PNL members, but were unable to sway large numbers of opposition parliamentarians who were unmoved by Boc's defense of his minority government's attempts to reform luxury pensions received by former Members of Parliament. (reftel B.) (This proposed reform conforms to IMF conditions for a bail-out loan given to the Government of Romania.)

14. (SBU) Despite the PM's attempts to divide the opposition, the PNL and PSD were able to maintain party discipline and pass the no-confidence motion by a vote of 258 to 176. The vote needed a minimum of 236 to pass. PNL chairman and presidential candidate Crin Antonescu warned his party's MPs that they would be expelled from the party if they did not attend the vote. Although the votes were cast on secret ballots, PNL and PSD MPs were instructed to show their votes to the party whips. The UMDR characteristically attempted to extract promises from both sides before telling their members to vote their conscience.

15. (SBU) Just hours after the vote the President gave a televised speech in which he stated that the cabinet collapsed in a democratic manner and contrasted this government with other governments that were forced out of power by previous presidents. Basescu thanked Boc for his service and listed the reforms that Boc and the PDL have

successfully and unsuccessfully championed, echoing Boc's claims that the Cabinet had fallen on the altar of reform. (Basescu's statements suggest that Boc will not be re-nominated as Prime Minister although he could remain as interim PM indefinitely.) Basescu also called on representatives from each party to meet separately with him in his office before the end of the day. Geoana immediately refused this request on behalf of the PSD.

¶6. (C) COMMENT. Despite the no-confidence motion, Boc and his cabinet will continue to serve on an interim basis. While PNL and PSD supporters will vocally push President Basescu to quickly nominate a new prime minister, the Constitution does not provide for a time limit to this process. Basescu, a wily politician, is likely to carefully choose the timing of the announcement. It remains to be seen if the opposition will be able to gain momentum from their success today, but both Geoana and Antonescu, who have been rumored to lack the support of their respective parties, can celebrate this show of party unity. The recent political drama is largely posturing, in preparation for the upcoming Presidential election, rather than an issue of day-to-day governing. While the fall of the cabinet prevents the government from governing by emergency order and precludes major reforms, it allows each side to truthfully claim at least a partial victory as government decisions remain in a holding pattern until after the second round of presidential elections on December 6. END COMMENT.

GITENSTEIN